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NEWS

Jenks to offer respite time for cognitively impaired residents

JOYCE WESTNER | STAFF WRITER

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Nurse Colleen Wages, far right, and Phillip Beltz, in blue shirt, demonstrate chair exercises at the Jenks. WINCHESTER NEWS STAFF PHOTO/JOYCE WESTNER

Starting in March, the Winchester Council on Aging (COA) will of caregivers a chance to drop off their loved ones for three hours o

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and lunch.

The pilot program is accepting up to eight residents on two Wednesdays, March 6 and 13.

Jenks Nurse Colleen Wages has accepted four seniors already and will take four more applicants. The program is appropriate for those with various types of impairments, says Wages, including Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI), Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, and other forms of dementia.

Jenks Director Phillip Beltz said the goal of the program is two-fold: "to provide social engagement and stimulating activities for the seniors, but also to give their caregivers three hours to take care of themselves," something he says is hard for those who can't leave their loved ones alone.

Winchester Council on Aging will offer caregivers a chance to drop off their loved ones for thre activities and lunch. WINCHESTER NEWS STAFF PHOTO/JOYCE WESTNER

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Wages is looking for a volunteer to help with the seniors, someone who has a lot of patience and empathy with cognitively impaired adults.

“We have a lot of great volunteers,” says Beltz. “But this requires someone with a different set of skills.”

While at the Jenks, seniors will be supervised by Wages, who says, “Since I started my nursing career, I’ve always been drawn to seniors and how to make their lives easier.”

Right now she offers both blood-pressure screening at the Jenks or at the two senior residences, plus blood sugar tests, including for speakers of Mandarin, who have a higher rate of diabetes than other ethnic groups.

Activities for participants, who must be 60 or older, might include chair exercise, music, art, storytelling and games, and a pizza lunch and snacks will be served. They’re already planning for a music therapist and their regular therapy dog, and they’ll also have a robotic therapy cat and dog to help keep anxiety at bay.

Wages will screen applicants to make sure they can take care of their own bathroom needs, feed themselves and follow directions. She also wants to make sure they’re not abusive, and that they can be redirected if they’re prone to wandering.

While the program is best suited for ambulatory people, Wages says it’s OK if they need a cane, walker, or are in a wheelchair.

There is no charge for the program and interested parties can contact Wages at 781-721-7136 for more information and for a screening appointment.

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Beltz is hoping the pilot program proves its worth, with a start-up cost from the COA of $10,000, and that they can get more funding from grants and donations to accept more seniors in the future.

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NEWS

Rep. Michael Day helps House colleagues pass sweeping energy affordability bill

The following was submitted by the Office of Rep. Michael S. Day: Rep. Michael S. Day and his colleagues in the House of Representatives recently passed energy affordability legislation that would result in over $9 billion in savings for utility ratepayers over the next 10 years. The bill maintains critical

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Sen. Jason Lewis, Mass. Senate strengthen fair housing protections for renters, buyers

The following was submitted by the Office of Sen. Jason Lewis: State Sen. Jason Lewis joined his colleagues in the Massachusetts Senate to pass legislation that protects residents from discrimination in the housing market as the Trump administration abandons its enforcement of the federal Fair Housing Act. Illegal discrimination continues

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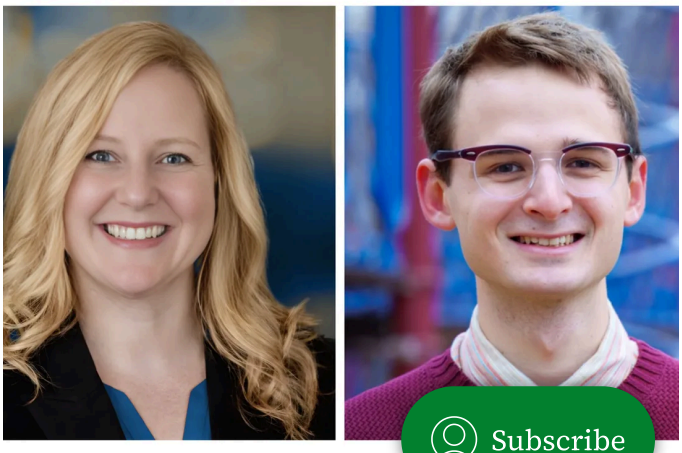

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Celebrate Women's History Month with Girls Leading Change

The following was submitted by the Network for Social Justice: To mark Women's History Month and International Women's Day in 2026, the Network for Social Justice is collaborating with club leaders from Winchester High School and members of the Community Health team from La Colaborativa in Chelsea and

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Winchester School Committee candidates bring contrasting backgrounds to Thursday forum

Two candidates for Winchester's School Committee will face voters at a forum as the district navigates a new literacy curriculum, budget pressures and questions about student mental health. Heather von Mering and John Bellaire are competing for an open seat on the School Committee, which oversees a budget von

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FEATURES

'Chicago: Teen Edition' dances onto the Winchester High School stage

By Talia Ho | Correspondent Fame. Fortune. And all that jazz. This spring, Winchester High School presents "Chicago: Teen Edition," a bold musical that explores celebrity culture, media manipulation, and the cost of ambition. This iconic production is set in the 1920s. Performances will take place on March 13 and 14

SPECIAL TO THE NEWS

March 4, 2026

EVENTS

Ripley Chapel in Winchester presents 'Syldason: You Are Welcome Here'

The following was submitted by the Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church: On Friday, March 13, beginning at 7:30 p.m., live in-person and live streamed from the stunning Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church, Winchester, 21 Church St., join in with Syldason, a duo concert featuring Sylvie Zakarian,

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